

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L THE HAGUE 3024

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO NAC NL
SUBJECT: THE HAGUE AFTER THE SUMMIT

SUMMARY: IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE NATO SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON,
THERE ARE QUESTIONS IN THE HAGUE ABOUT THE THREE PERCENT
COMMITMENT AND WRY AMUSEMENT, PARTICULARLY AMONG THE
GOVERNMENT'S CRITICS, ABOUT THE WAY DUTCH MINISTERS FOUND
THEMSELVES CAUGHT SHORT IN WASHINGTON ABOUT WESTERN PLANS
WITH RESPECT TO ZAIRE. END SUMMARY

1. THE GON COMMITMENT TO AN ANNUAL THREE PERCENT
INCREASE IN REAL DEFENSE SPEDNIG HAS GIVEN RISE TO
SOME CONFUSION IN THE HAGUE WHICH IS BEING EXPLOITED BY THE
OPOSITION. THE UNCERTAINTY RELATES TO THE BASE FOR MEASURING
THE THREE PERCENT; WHETHER IT IS THE ENTIRE DEFENSE BUDGET
OR ONLY THAT PART OF THE DEFENSE BUDGET RELATING TO NATO TASKS.
A FURTHER QUESTION IS WHETHER THE DEFENSE BUDGET, INCREASED BY
THREE PERCENT, WILL BE SUBJECT TO ACROSS-THE-BOARD SPENDING CUTS
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EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED LATER THIS MONTH. CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT
(CDA) FLOOR LEADER AANTJES, PERHAPS THE MOST POWERFUL MAN
IN PARLIAMENT, TOUCHED ON THIS ISSUE ON NATIONAL TELEVISION
ON MAY 30 IN TERMS SUGGESTING THAT THE DEFENSE BUDGET
MIGHT NOT
BE EXEMPT FROM IMMINENT CUTS. EDITORIAL OPINION HAS LOST NO
TIME POINTING OUT THE PARADOX OF RAISING THE DEFENSE BUDGET

ONE DAY WHILE LOWERING IT THE NEXT. WITHIN A DAY OF AANTJES' COMMENTS, HOWEVER, DEFENSE MINISTER SCHOLTEN TOLD DUTCH PRESS IN WASHINGTON THAT THE THREE PERCENT INCREASE WOULD BE BASED ON THE ENTIRE DEFENSE BUDGET. FORMER PRIME MINISTER DEN UYL HAS ASKED FOR A PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE. THIS IS NOW SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 7. NO DOUBT THE GOVERNMENT WILL ADD PRECISION TO THE ACTUAL AMOUNTS INVOLVED IN THE THREE PERCENT EXERCISE AND IN ALL LIKELIHOOD IT WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS STICK IN PARLIAMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE LAST WORD ON THIS ISSUE FROM THE HAGUE HAS NOT YET BEEN HEARD.

2. A SECOND THEME ARISING OUT OF THE SUMMIT IS THE APPARENT INEPTNESS WITH WHICH PRIME MINISTER VAN AGT AND FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER KLAAUW REACTED TO THE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR JUNE 5 IN PARIS ON ZAIRE. IN AN APPARENTLY UNCONTROLLED FIRST REACTION, PRIME MINISTER VAN AGT TOLD DUTCH CORRESPONDENTS THAT "THIS WHOLE STORY ABOUT PARIS AMOUNTS TO NOTHING" AND CHARACTERIZED THE MEETING AS POST-KOLWEZI DRIVEL. BOTH VAN AGT AND VAN DER KLAAUW, POSSIBLY IN PIQUE, LEFT THE IMPRESSION THEY WANTED NOTHING TO DO WITH THE PARIS MEETING, THOUGH VAN AGT LEFT OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF DUTCH PARTICIPATION IN BRUSSELS LATER IN JUNE. THE DUTCH PRESS HERE HAS BEEN POKING FUN AT THE TWO DUTCH MINISTERS WHO, THOUGH PRESENT IN WASHINGTON WHILE PLANS FOR PARIS WERE BEING PREPARED, SEEMED UNAWARE OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. WHILE THE ATTITUDE OF VAN AGT AND VAN DER KLAAUW ACCURATELY REFLECTS THE PREVAILING PARLIAMENTARY AND PUBLIC

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SENTIMENT HERE WHICH IS HIGHLY SKEPTICAL OF A WESTERN EFFORT IN ZAIRE, PARTICULARLY INsofar AS IT INCLUDES MILITARY ELEMENTS, OPPONENTS OF THE GOVERNMENT CAN BE EXPECTED NOT TO SPARE THEIR RIDUCULE. ON THIS ISSUE, TOO, THE GOVERNMENT IS NOT LIKELY TO BE IN DANGER THOUGH IT IS CLEAR FOREIGN MINISTER VAN DER KLAAUW IN WASHINGTON DID NOT ADD TO HIS STANDING WITH THE DUTCH PRESS.

3. WITH THE RETURN OF VAN AGT YESTERDAY AND VAN DER KLAAUW IN A FEW DAYS, WE EXPECT FURTHER POLITICAL AND PRESS REACTIONS TO THE NATO SUMMIT. FOR NOW, HOWEVER, MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS, UNUSUALLY WARM WEATHER AND THE START OF THE WORLD CUP ARE TAKING THE HEADLINES.
BROWN

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